



Plumbing

Fact Sheet

The Plumbing Program is mandated by state law (Louisiana Revised Statutes 40:4.A (7)), but is not funded by either self-generated monies nor by state general fund monies. Vigorous enforcement of the Code is required to prevent corner cutting and introduction of unsafe products or practices which could kill or injure people. A strong State Plumbing Code is vital to ensuring public safety and quality economic development.

The purpose of plumbing oversight is to keep the safe water separate from the wastewater, prevent back siphonage of wastewater or harmful chemicals into the safe water system, prevent exposure of people to sewer gases (which can contain diseases like SARS and Legionnaire's Disease) and prevent cross connection of unsafe liquids into the drinking water system. Developers want to cut corners, reduce fixtures, and sometimes use new products that are unsafe and can cause injuries and deaths.

Performance Indicators

- % of deaths from sewer gases/poor plumbing
- %hospitalizations from sewer gases/plumbing

Narrative

Engineers review and issue permits for plumbing plans and specifications for public buildings (especially those with vulnerable populations like schools, hospitals, nursing homes, review and approve/disapprove new or innovative products or practices, advise plumbers, sanitarians and the Fire Marshall's Office on technical construction and installation issues, and periodically work with shareholders to keep the Code up to date. Engineers also review and recommend action to the State Health officer on requests for variances from the Plumbing Code.

The purpose is solely to protect the public from unsafe ventilation, cross connections, and backsiphonage of potentially hazardous substances into homes, schools, businesses or other structures where people could be harmed.

Better Health

- Every person bathes in, drinks , cooks, or washes with water daily. This water may arrive safe at the structure, but without a strong plumbing code, may not remain safe inside the structure due to design issues that allow chemicals and wastewater to enter the safe water plumbing system. To keep people safe from contaminated water and sewer gases, a strong Plumbing Code is needed. The population served is >5.4 Million people/year – including citizens and visitors. There would be little economic development or tourism in Louisiana if people were made ill or died from exposure to poor plumbing, or if public buildings did not have adequate or working fixtures. Schools, clinics and hospitals are especially vulnerable to cross connections, because they have hazardous fluid pipelines side by side with drinking water lines.
- Engineering Services collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders, including: the FHA and the CDC, the State Plumbing Board, the Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code Council, the State Board for Licensing Engineers, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the Police Jury Association, DAF (agricultural chemical contamination), the Public Service Commission (privately-owned water systems), and the Fire Marshall's office. National collaborations include the American Backflow Prevention Association, the National Association of Drinking Water Companies, the Environmental Council of States, the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, the Water Environment Federation and the American Water Works Association.
- Engineering Services staff respond to every request for variance from the code, new product and new system approvals, and citizen complaint, and work hands-on with sanitarians, plumbers, the Code Council, and the Fire Marshall's Office, to ensure that plumbing are installed safely and in compliance with the regulations.
- Vigilance is required to protect the public from poor plumbing products and bad designs, especially with vulnerable populations in public buildings, such as schools, nursing homes, hospitals, day care centers, and prisons. Good engineering decisions are required daily on topics such as green design, water reuse, fire protection chemicals, solar heating, new and innovative products. Incidents of SARS and Legionnaire's Disease from poor plumbing have been documented in other states and in other countries, but not in Louisiana, because of the quality of the Plumbing Code. Other agencies, like FEMA try to construct structures with substandard plumbing that have cause illness and deaths in other states but not in Louisiana because of DHH vigilance.

State Authority: L.R.S. 40:4.A(7), State Regulation: LAC 51, Part XIV

Links to programs are:

- Center for Environmental Health: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=242>
- DHH-OPH Engineering Services: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=204>,
- Safe Drinking Water: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?id=238>.